DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 435 CE 009 280

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TITLE The Place of Vocational Education in Higher Education: Implications for Educational R&D. Distinguished Lecture Series, No. 4.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Center for Vocational Education.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 9p.; Speech presented at a staff development seminar, Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Vocational Education Publications, 1960 Kenny Rd., Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210 ($1.50)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Higher Education; *Institutional Role; Research Needs; Speeches; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

Half of this paper is the text of a lecture on the role of the university in job-related education in which the author suggests what universities ought to learn from vocational education. Pointing out that the challenge goes deeper than vocational or professional education, he challenges universities to have an eye for theory and practice, an eye for student career decisions and job prospect trends, an eye for the values of the liberal arts, and an eye for trends and directions in many advanced and complex professional fields. He contends that allegations that colleges and universities are flooding the job market with people with unusable college degrees are unfounded, but notes that vocational education establishments tell their story well by keeping better records on their graduates and what they are doing. The second half of the paper consists of the author's answers to four questions from the audience of educational research and development personnel. (HD)

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Distinguished Lecture Series, No. 4

THE PLACE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL R&D

by

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Commissioner of Higher Education
State of Utah

The Center for Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
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1976

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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PREFACE

The purpose of The Center's Distinguished Lecture Series in Career Development is to present major, critical thinkers who will persistently challenge and stimulate the university, its colleges, departments, The Center, and the national community to the ends that goals will be clarified, priorities will be more appropriately ordered, methods will be more effective, and human lives will be enriched.

The Ohio State University and The Center have selected Dr. Terrel H. Bell as its fourth annual distinguished lecturer in the series. This presentation and lecture series represents an expansion of the many valuable research services provided by the University and The Center. The Center and The Ohio State University feel that the contributions of Dr. Bell, and those to follow in the series, will provide an excellent means to further insure its mission of providing current and highly critical information to be used by educators at all levels for the improvement of existing and future eductional programs.

Dr. Terrel H. Bell was appointed Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Utah on August 1, 1976. As Commissioner, he serves as chief executive officer of the Utah State Board of Regents which is the governing board for the state of Utah. Prior to assuming his duties as Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Bell served from 1974 to 1976 as the twenty-first Commissioner of Education in the 107 year history of the U.S. Office of Education. He was sworn in by HEW Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger on June 13, eight days after his appointment was confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Dr. Bell had been Superintendent of the Granite School District, Salt Lake City, beginning in September 1971. From 1970 to 1971 he was with the U.S. Office of Education, serving as Associate Commissioner in charge of Regional Offices, Acting Commissioner of Education (June--December 1970), and Deputy Commissioner for School Systems. From 1963 to 1970 he was Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Executive Officer of the State Board for Vocational Education.

During his previous service in Washington, Dr. Bell was instrumental in establishing comparability for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act--the requirement that federal funds supplement rather than supplant state and local funds. He also played a major role in the Office of Education's effort to desegregate, under the Emergency School Assistance Program, some 1,300 school districts in the South.

Born in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, Dr. Bell received his B.A. degree from Southern Idaho College of Education in 1946, his M.S. from the University of Idaho in 1954, and his doctorate in educational administration from the University of Utah in 1961. He also studied school administration as a Ford Foundation Fellow in 1954-55 at Stanford University.

Dr. Bell began his career in education in 1946 as a science teacher and athletic coach at Eden Rural High School in Eden, Idaho. From 1947 to 1954, he served as Superintendent of the Rockland Valley (Idaho) School District. In 1955 he became Superintendent of Schools in the Star Valley School District, Afton, Wyoming, and held this position for the next three years. From 1957 to 1962, he was Superintendent of Schools in the Weber County School District, Ogden, Utah. He was Chairman of the Department of Educational Administration and Professor of Educational Administration at Utah State University from 1962 to 1963.

Dr. Bell holds an honorary Doctorate of Humanities degree from Southern Utah State College. His other honors and awards include: Certificate of Appreciation from the U.S. Office of Education in 1971; Secretary's Special Citation from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1970; National Adult Education Outstanding Service Award in 1970; Distinguished Service to American Education Award from the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1970; Utah School Boards Association Distinguished Service Award in 1970; and the Weber County Board of Education designation of a new secondary school as T. H. Bell Junior High School in 1963.

Dr. Bell is a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappi Phi, and is the author of five published books and numerous articles on educational subjects.

During World War II, Dr. Bell served for twenty-six months in the Pacific Area and was discharged as a First Sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1957 he was married to Betty Ruth Fitzgerald. They have four sons: Mark Fitzgerald, Warren Terrel, Glenn Martin, and Peter Fitzgerald.

On behalf of The Ohio State University and The Center for Vocational Education, I take considerable pleasure in introducing Dr. Terrel Bell's address on "The Place of Vocational Education in Higher Education: Implications for Educational R&D."

Robert E. Taylor, Director
The Center for Vocational Education

THE PLACE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL R&D

During my tenure as U.S. Commissioner of Education, I had the priviledge of addressing a gathering in Washington, D.C., of the Presidents of the Liberal Arts Colleges of the nation. In that address I ran into a veritable hornet's nest because of two statements that I made. I said that we should seek to vocationalize liberal education and we should also seek to liberalize vocational education. Then I went on to suggest that education in the liberal arts will and should continue be the heart of undergraduate collegiate education. I emphasized that students who leave the liberal arts college equipped with Freud, Chaucer, and Hemmingway, but without specific preparation in a professional or vocational field—that these students were kidding themselves. Those remarks triggered a big debate in the White House with Robert Goldwin, the President's professor, and with other White House staffers.

In most of the states, higher education is having a struggle these days over the task of keeping budget levels up with inflation. At the same time, vocational/technical institutes and community colleges are prospering. The typical legislator labels these latter institutions as being practical contributors to the economy. The same legislator turns to some of the newspapers and other periodical literature and reads about the surplus of college graduates—about universities turning out Ph.D.'s who can't find work—about educated people who can *think* but can't *do*. Few realize how much of today's university program is vocational and job oriented. And it is a strange paradox that many universities do not want to admit the extent of their vocational, job-oriented commitments. I don't know if it is prestige or put-on, but it is a problem.

I do not believe that the facts will bear out the allegations that the colleges and universities are flooding the job market with people with unusable college degrees. Indeed, most of the graduates are still getting good jobs, and some writers in the public press have generalized from some actual circumstances that do not represent the situation as it exists. Out in the Rocky Mountains we have an expression that puts the finger on this type of logic. We say: "All Indians walk single file . . . at least the one that I saw did."

The point I want to make from all this is that the vocational education establishment tells their story well. They keep better records on their graduates and what they are doing. This helps them to tell their story. What is even more significant, they have one eye on the job market and they have the other one on their placement record. Ask the president of a vocational/technical institute or the director of an area vocational school what last year's graduates are doing and chances are that he or she will readily pull out a file and tell you more than you want to know about the subject. Ask this same question of a typical university dean and you will—if your experience parallels mine— have a hard time getting answers. The purpose of my presentation today is to examine the role of the university in job-related education and to suggest what universities ought to learn from vocational education.

I recognize that the vocational/technical institute has a more narrow mission than a university. I know that education in its broad and rich perspective must do more—much more—than prepare and place graduates in employment. But this is one aspect of a university's mission, and it is a most vital one at that. In emphasizing this I must hasten to acknowledge and to add my own emphasis to the fact that education must be concerned with the minds of students. We must discipline the intellect and do all we can to develop human intelligence to enrich the lives of people and push back the frontier of knowledge to solve the problems of the human family. There is much more to life than one's

work, and education that begins and ends with preparation for work is not nearly as broad and comprehensive as it should be. The only thing worse than this is education that ignores the reality of work and the influence that work has upon all our lives. As I see it, many of us in the world of academe often try to pretend that education is too lofty and the ideals of learning are too high to be concerned about jobs and making money. The fact is that most university students arrive on campus with graduation and placement in a promising career as priority number one. And too many of the professional inhabitants of academe pretend that this is not so.

One of the most important decisions made by young adults of college age is the decision on a lifetime career. Most of these decisions are made during the first or second year of college. And the painful truth is that most academic communities spend little time or means helping the typical university student to make a wise decision. I know that college counselors are available and that most universities have placement officers, but comprehensive programs to lend assistance in depth do not exist in very many universities. The leaders in the academic community should, I believe, catch the spirit of the career education movement and bring those concepts front and center in the college and university program. It is almost as amazing as it is discouraging to find the number of educators who believe that career education and vocational education are one and the same thing.

University students seek a baccalaureate or graduate degree for many reasons, but the foremost one is to prepare for and launch a lifetime career. As I see it, the first responsibility of a university is to either prepare most of its students for employment or prepare them for further graduate work ultimately leading to employment or professional practice. (I want to hasten to say that this is not the only responsibility nor the only high priority responsibility of a university, but it is the first one.) The way for a university to gain the acclaim and the support it properly needs and deserves from legislators and from business and industry is for the entire academic community to embrace this concept as performance priority number one. This does not mean that the development and enrichment of minds, nor the research mission, nor the general cultural enrichment objective are of lesser importance. These cannot be abandoned or supported with less enthusiasm.

A need common to all of us to have work to do that is challenging, fulfilling, and self-image building. Even the wealthy need work, for life is dull and listless without it. Witness those of great wealth who fight for a seat in the U.S. Senate or who battle for the Governor's chair if you don't believe that a challenging job is important to everyone, including the wealthy, who need not the return of the salary but the fulfillment of the task itself.

Alfred North Whitehead said it well when he stated that "education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can *do* well. This intimate union of practice and theory aids both. The intellect does not work in a vacuum . . . ." We need the concrete and pragmatic application of what we learn to make us whole—to make us complete. The greatest joy in life is the joy of accomplishment. And most of this for most of us comes to us through our work. Education can become more of a live and living process if it relates to life and to concrete purposes. Not only must the university teach us how to acquire knowledge and to keep on learning after leaving the campus, it must also teach us how to apply knowledge. The zest for knowledge and the vitality of learning comes with the anticipation of its application. Vocational educators seem to know this, and it is the key to success in gaining public acclaim and support.

By trying to keep learning above and isolated from work, the "purists" on the university campus create an ugly duplicity between technical or professional education and liberal education. As Whitehead emphasizes, all education should lead to a quick transition from theory and abstraction to actual practice through application. If we are to correct the dysfunction between education and jobs in American society, the academic communities in the universities of the nation must recognize

that many young people are coming into the university systems and not finding a sense of reality that frankly and clearly connects their studies to the world of work. There are human values—very rich and meaningful ones—that are implicit in education for work. In this regard, the most distinguished university could gain much by tearing a page out of the vocational/technical institute's book of work-related education.

Because of its greatness of capacity to do so much for students, a university that would make a full, unequivocal commitment to work-related education for all its students would have the best of all worlds—of both the liberal arts and vocational/technical worlds of education. But the problem is that many university, liberal arts college, and vocational education leaders have misunderstood education and its place and purpose in our society. Many have emphasized the point that you either go to college for the development of the human spirit and intellect or you go to college to master a vocation or a profession. We must stop insisting on this either/or situation. The university must insist on educating for both purposes or reasons and not for one at the exclusion of the other. The university, being the great place or entity that it is, can bridge all of this and meet fully the total aspiration of both without neglect of either.

It is those who say that education is only for work who claim that we have many overeducated people today and that we need to send more to the technical institute and less to the university. This implies that education is for minimum job entry preparation—that we should appraise what the entry level requirements are and match students with types of institutions accordingly. But the university that accepts a job-related education commitment with the same intensity of the vocational/technical institute can argue successfully that there are no overeducated people—that one cannot attain too much learning. People who can't find jobs may be miseducated or undereducated in meeting a specific need, but as long as there is more to learn that can be applied to life and to living, there can be no such thing as an overeducated person. To help decrease those with college degrees and no employment prospects, the university must do more to help students to be aware of the employment prospects. In short, they must join the career education movement with the same intense concern for their students as the vocational/technical institute has. Instead of lamenting the lack of acclaim and support for higher education, we must turn in this direction to win it back.

In conclusion, I want to affirm my strong conviction that it takes a long period of serious study over a number of years to prepare our citizens for both the challenges of adult life and work. The university, because of its comprehensiveness of staff and other resources, can meet the depths of this challenge if it will. The challenge goes deeper than vocational or professional education wherein we train physicians and plumbers. There must be an intimate union between practice and theory and there must be close monitoring and student guidance so that there is another initimate union between career decisions made by students on the university campus and job prospect realities in our extremely complex society. The university must have an eye for theory and practice, an eye for student career decisions and job prospects trends, an eye for the values of the liberal arts, and an eye for trends and directions in many advanced and complex professional fields.

The sum total of all the intelligence that a university can muster today is vast and awesomely capable. With all of this capacity and power, the university can embrace simultaneously the ideal and the practical and give its students the best of both worlds. But if this is done, the academic community must be both as pragmatic and "earth like" as the "vokies" and as ethereal and head-in-the-clouds as the idealists of academe. The key to prosperity and acclaim for today's university is to embrace the down-to-earth pragmatism of the "vokies"—to commit itself to job-related education and career placement of its students. This, I argue, need not be done at the expense of the liberal arts, or at the cost of neglect of research and other intellectual pursuits found on the campus of a great American university.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Should institutions of higher education be required to collect and report placement data?

Answer: I would hate to see that required. I have been putting out so much required stuff as Commissioner of Education that I cringe away from that. Now that I'm in higher education and have responsibility for administration of the statewide system, I find myself confronted with my own rules and saying "Why did I do that?", now that I have to live with it. I know that the Federal Trade Commission has been requiring it with the private institutions. They're saying that fairness to the consumer dictates that you ought to tell him if he's going to stewardess school, that most stewardesses are females. Perhaps with the era of Title 9, sex equality, there will be the greatest opportunity for placement. I think there ought to be more emphasis on that than there has been.

One of the things that I think would be a good procedure in every university would be to have some center where students could come and spend—maybe two weeks— in intensive career education. Now career education involves teaching about the whole array of job and professional opportunities that are available in our country. The Labor Department puts out a big book called the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. I find that part of my criticism of universities is that this book is dog-eared and used in vocational schools and practically ignored on university campuses.

Question: What other services should be provided by an institution of higher education to convey career awareness?

Answer: I think it's a mistake to have a student go to the professor of sociology or psychology for his career counseling, or to talk to an English professor and say "In which department should I specialize?" If I were a professor of sociology on this campus, I would want to build the enrollment of that department so I'm a pretty poor source to ask. If a student asked "What are the job placement prospects for a person with a B.S. degree is sociology?", I probably wouldn't be mendacious in my response, but I just might well be stingy with the truth in that regard. Therefore, I think that the services being rendered have to come over into some kind of territory where there isn't bias. Elliot Richardson, the former secretary of HEW, used to tell us that where you stand depends upon where you sit. So you shouldn't ask me or the engineering professor what the job placement prospects are, what the requirements are, and so on in that regard. Now I wouldn't want to insult all our colleagues by saying that they would give an answer detrimental to the individual, but I think that there would be some bias. And I ask myself, just what does a university do with the crop of new freshmen and the sophomores who are wondering what they ought to do. As I reflect upon that with my own son at the University of Utah who doesn't know what he wants to do with his life work; I've been interested in discovering how the university goes about conveying that information and knowledge to students. I think we can do a better job in that regard, and I'm overemphasizing that, I think that it can't be done by the various departments singly and separately. You're awfully naive when you are a college freshman and that's a good thing, but we ought not take advantage of that openness in a way that ultimately may be detrimental to the students. Another point that I'd like to make is that I don't think that we nearly tell the story of the job placement record. Knowing that the economy in Ohio has been pretty vigorous and you haven't had the slump that they've had in other states, I would guess that the graduates of this university last spring did pretty well. But I would bet that if you would ask some of the men on the street, from their reading of newspapers, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News* that you'd get the conclusion that this institution is producing a large number of people who are wandering around with their sheepskin in their hand and wiping the tears with the other and they don't know where to go to find work. And that just isn't so! They're not doing the job of telling that story that Byrl Shoemaker and his colleagues are doing in the state of Ohio.

Question: The problem of defining "liberal arts education" is what seems to be the concern of most vocational educators.

Answer: We have two institutions in Utah that are two-year institutions. They are called technical colleges and they're prohibited by the legislature from offering too much of what we call "academics." Wilson Sorrenson, the president of the Utah Technical College at Provo, has gotten into difficulty because he's been offering instruction there that the vocational educators might not label as "related training." The critics say that if it isn't specifically related to the job, then it's taboo. Now I think that attitude, and I know it isn't shared by most vocational education leaders, is as bad as the most fanatical liberal arts advocate in the other direction. All of us know that the vote of the fellow who carries a lunch bucket and wears a blue collar counts as much as ours and ideally he ought to be able to read the editorial pages and news magazines, listen to the Ford-Carter debates, and make up his mind on the issues if we are going to have an enlightened electorate. He has all the problems that the rest of us have of surviving in this society. And so I think that those who say that education begins and ends with a job are as bad off philosophically as the other extreme. It might be that higher education is doing a lot better job of orienting students and doing these things that we euphamistically refer to as career education. It might be that this is being done much better than my sloppy observations indicate. But I have felt that there is an enormous neglect here and hopefully the pressures that institutions are under at this time might help to bring that around.

Question: Congress and the federal bureaucracy continue to place social problems at the door of education for solutions. Can education continue to accept this increased level of responsibility?

Answer: I just say that we are overloading the system; we are just demanding more of education than we can do. We are trying to use education to solve all the ills of society and as a result of that we're certainly cluttering the curriculum. Take driver training, for example. A few years ago they would have laughed that out of the place as a course. Now we do it as a means of teaching survival on our highways. This is just one example of the add-on that's coming into the curriculum. I might comment that I think that the Congress is turning more and more to education as a means of realizing the ideals that we have in our Bill of Rights and in our Constitution. They emphasize equality of opportunity and opportunites for upward mobility. The demands on this university—affirmative action, Title 9, women's rights—all the rest of it are coming on real strong. And the Congress is no longer saying, we're going to defer to the states. They no longer accept that education is primarily a state and local responsibility. They are using education as an instrument for social reform, for economic progress, and I see that happening more and more. In fact, I fear that we are going to continue in our enthusiasm to use education for this purpose. As a result, we are going to get ourselves a national ministry of education before too long and that worries and concerns me. We are really overloading. You look at the demands upon Ohio State University, as huge and complex as this university is, the things that you must do, that the provost and the president have to do to comply with everything. It's a horrendous task and it's our enthusiasm to do more for people in this country and to provide better opportunity for them. That leads us to the very perplexing question that John Gardner raised in his book: Can we be both equal and excellent? I think we are losing some of this excellence in our quest for equality. But I don't say we've got to give up on the quest for equality even if we have to put up with a little decline in the excellence. I say it's long overdue. The discrimination against women and against minorities has existed in this country and it is a terrible tragedy. It is one of the things we have to do, in our Bicentennial year we must face with a degree of shame the way we've treated minorities in this country. You just read the data right now and you will know where the opportunities have been. Well, right now it is tough if you are white, middle-income male and that includes me. And I'd say it is about time because of what's happened to other people in that regard. And the Congress is legislating and mandating this reform and I think that it is a good thing. But I think we need to mellow our enthusiasm to the extent that we don't do too much damage to quality—and that's a good glib remark—but I do get concerned about what is happening in that regard. We must guard against extensive damage to quality in education as we pursue our quest for equality.

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